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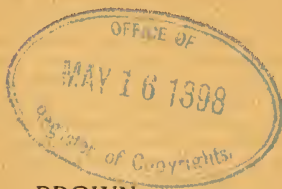
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FROM GENERATION

TO GENERATION



BROWN

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FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION

A POEM

Read before the Alumni Association of
Vanderbilt University
June 14, 1897

BY CALVIN S. BROWN
" "

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From Generation to Generation.



As children over games and toys
Their voices lift in gladsome noise,
Or fowls in wild excitement squawk
When suddenly there swoops a hawk ;
So grannies set in great commotion
A tumult raise like waves of ocean
When baby having winged its flight
On mundane sphere vouchsafes to light.
Thou type of innocence and love,
Descended angel from above,
Thy eyes shall mingle smiles and tears,
Thy hands shall pull thy father's ears,
Thy feet shall tangle in his beard,
Thy face with dirt and grease be smeared,
And after days of fun and frolic
Shall follow nights of squalls and colic.
Great bottles filled with soothing syrup
Shall help to make the cherub cheer up ;

And mother's love shall charm the gum
When baby's teeth begin to come ;
And to it talk such nonsense rare
As makes old bachelors to swear :
“ My 'itsy-bitsy tootsey-wootsey,
It 'oves its mammy, 'es it dootsey.”
“ Goo-goo ” replies the baby dear
And mother smiles from ear to ear ;
So well to talk and yet so young
Has ne'er before been granted tongue.
O noble gift, the gift of speech ;
Without it, how could soul e'er reach
Another soul, or thoughts that glow
Themselves unto another show ?
Or how could babe at dead of night
His father call to strike a light,
Or else invoke his kindly aid
At two o'clock for promenade ?

Not Wellington at Waterloo,
Who fought as soldiers ought to do,
Nor Solomon in all his glory,
Nor proudest king in ancient story,
E'er felt one half the throbbing joy
That enters into heart of boy

The day when free from earthly cares
He first a pair of trousers wears,
He may have joy in after years
When fame his name to glory rears
Through poesy's immortal song
Or victory achieved o'er wrong,
When opulence and honor meet
To do their homage at his feet,
But ne'er again so high it reaches
As when he first puts on his breeches.

What treasure hopeful's pockets hold
Has never or but half been told
Of tops and knives and spools and strings,
Of buttons, marbles, nails and slings,
And odds and ends both great and small ;
Nor dare I hope to tell it all.
How sad to girls must be their lot
To see these things and have them not.
How many deeds of valor done
And victories in battle won
O'er frogs and snakes and bumble-bees,
How many feats of climbing trees,
Inspire with pride his youthful breast,
And keep his mother's heart distressed ;

How often sister weeps for woe
When brother entertains her beau.

Yet comes a day when books and slate
Reveal the frowning face of fate,
And teacher's knocks and scholar's thumps
Succeed to mother's sugar lumps.

Not Icarus in space afloat
Nor Jonah in torpedo boat
More out of place or ill at ease
Could feel than boy at A B C's.
But time goes on and as it goes
It brings relief to mortal woes :
The schoolhouse once an ogre's den
No longer seems a slaughter-pen
And ogre's head whene'er he nods
Is now a mark for paper wads.

Thus usage makes of strangest sight
A commonplace, like air or light :
The sea no terror has for sailor,
Nor savage beast for mountain trailer,
And woman e'en by long restraint
At sight of mouse may cease to faint.

Old Cicero by yards is spouted
And Cataline again is routed ;

Demonsthenes remounts the stage
And for his crown begins to rage ;
Mark Anthony comes, while grief dismays him,
To bury Cæsar, not to praise him ;
Rienzi wakes Eternal City,
And Emmet stirs all hearts to pity ;
The boy again on burning deck
Proceeds to view the battle's wreck ;
And Patrick Henry, out of breath,
Prefers his liberty to death.

O golden youth, how sweet thy dreams,
How bright from out the future gleams
The star of hope ; what visions rise
Before thy hope-enkindled eyes.
Dream on, O youth, nor dream in vain,
But let thy heart with might and main
Pursue thy dream, and ere life flees
Thy dreams may prove realities.

By slow degrees there comes a change
Betrayed by actions sly and strange ;
He combs his hair, begins to shave,
Considers how he shall behave ;
He pats his dog and hugs his sister,
And likes to hear himself called Mister.

At night in bed he rolls and tumbles,
In waking hours he dreams and stumbles.
At length, his soul in anguish stewing,
He feels within some verses brewing ;
No use to stop or face about,
Like love and murder rime will out.
Through thirteen copies, day and night,
He labors hard to get one right ;
Then scents it o'er with flower dew
And binds it up with ribbon blue ;
Then seals it with a turtledove
And sends it forth to greet his love.

O beautiful maid,
Come out in the shade,
Where grass-hoppers their lays are chiming.
We will tell love's tales,
And play with the snails,
As slowly the stumps they are climbing,
The spring is now here,
O maiden so dear ;
The crawfish in the mud are working ;
The hogs root the ground,
And give out a sound
Like a rope through a knot-hole jerking.

The birds in the tree
Call forth you and me ;
I hear the woodpecker chatter,
O jewel so rare,
Come out in the air,
Or I shall go mad as a hatter.

The maiden yields, as maids will do,
And gives true love to lover true.
He treads the air and basks in ether ;
She likewise rests with naught beneath her ;
Content in one another's love,
They float serene in realms above.

Alas, alas, how cruel fate
The truest loves may separate ;
For parents see, though love is blind,
And rivals sue and favor find,
And time itself, though changing never,
May alter destiny forever.
For seven days, in deep dejection,
Grim sorrow gnaws at his complexion ;
No star from out the future gleams
And gone are all his golden dreams ;
On death he calls, but still refuses
Its gurgling streams and running nooses ;

For though of love men sometimes die,
'Tis after not before the tie.

But sorrow's pangs, by time revealed,
At length by time are also healed.
E'en widows doomed to years of grief
In months have found a sweet relief.
So after twelve or fifteen days
He takes to food and former ways ;
And ere a month has folded wing
Another has him on her string.

The world spread out before him lies,
And o'er it dance his eager eyes ;
Not large enough by half it seems
To one who dreams such mighty dreams.
To give his name to fame and story
How light the task, how great the glory ;
And wealth he'll get beyond all measure
Some afternoon when out for pleasure.
Thus hopeful for the coming years
He laughs away his mother's tears,
Receives his father's parting word,
And at the gate his voice is heard
As back he shouts a last adieu ;
And then his form is lost to view.

A sigh heaves at his yearning breast,
But ere 'tis uttered is repressed.
The heart of youth uncramped by fears
But little time can give to tears.
Now, world, prepare to yield thy treasure,
A youth has come to take thy measure ;
Like poet hunting for a rime
He'll search thee o'er from clime to clime,
And pounce on all thy rich profusion,
As women jump at a conclusion.

Alas, this poor old world at best
Ne'er satisfies the human breast,
For things go wrong whate'er we do,
And half our visions prove untrue.
Though fortune's blind it's hard to nab her ;
She dodges when we try to grab her.
And fame is shy like maiden coy ;
And Cupid a capricious boy.
Yes, through we plan for good and strive
To reach the good which we contrive,
Our plans may fail, our good be lost,
Ourselves on seas of doubt be tossed.
Our dreams are nobler than our deeds ;
The grain is smothered by the weeds.

Our days are few and full of trouble
For pains and microbes bend us double ;
The lawyers take our goods by law,
The dentists breaks our under jaw,
The doctors cut off our nutrition,
And preachers preach us to perdition ;
Ah happy we if we escape
With soul or body from the scrape.

In strife and tumult precious years
Are wasted — cause for bitter tears ;
And nations join — more tears and salter —
In language fierce as old Gibraltar,
Or meet in armies on their border
And fight like beasts to keep good order.
Why kill the innocent like gophers
When earth is full of scamps and loafers ?
The creatures known as dudes are useless
And their existance here excuseless ;
The demagogues who stir the masses
Should go to grass like other asses ;
And all the bores and parasites.
Should sail for Saturn's satellites.
'Tis thus the progress of the race
Advances at but half its pace.

So learns the youth ere many moons
That all the months aren't Mays and Junes,
That hopes before the breeze are swept
And promises not all are kept,
That smiles aren't always from the heart
And cheeks are sometimes works of art.
The world itself may smile on Sunday
And frown again before 'tis Monday ;
Permitting man to reach the top,
It shakes him off to hear him drop ;
But then the frown in shortest while
May turn again to brightest smile,
And he who's made of proper stuff
Will not recoil at each rebuff.

At length the worst is past and over
And he begins to roll in clover,
Which is to say, he has ahead
Enough to pay for meat and bread ;
No more his soul he has to vex
By writing to his pa for checks.
As springtime changes burnished dove
And turns man's heart to thoughts of love,
So knowing that he's self-supporting
May also turn his thoughts to courting.

All lovers see in loved ones' eyes
The beauties that they highest prize,
And tell to them the same old story
That Adam told to Eve in glory.
He woos his Eve ; the maiden meek
For manner's sake desires a week.
The days she spends to learn what dress
A maid should wear to answer yes ;
And when at length are passed the seven
She lifts the man from earth to heaven.
He seeks her father, wins approval,
And maid is ready for removal.
The knot is tied ; no fate can sever
The chord that binds their hearts forever.
Now, wisdom, fly, and let them be,
In honeymoon no need for thee ;
Such precious folly—let us flee it ;
The Sphinx herself would grin to see it.

Then when this moon has waned and they
Back to the earth have come to stay,
T'is worth a fortnight of one's life
To hear him when he calls her " wife,"
Or see her try to hide the blushes
As to her cheek the crimson rushes.

They get acquainted by degrees
And find themselves somewhat at ease,
Discuss their plans, their hopes, their fears,
Anticipate the coming years,
Acknowledge, as they ne'er had done,
That though in flesh the twain are one
They eat enough in truth for two
And that one suit for both won't do.

The years go by.— But hark, what's that ?
Oh, nothing but a squalling brat,
A type of innocence and love,
Descended angel from above,
Who spends his days in fun and frolic
And bawls the nights away in colic.

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